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**Urban Forestry Commission Position Paper on the  
Urban Canopy Goals of the Industrial Land Use Zone**

**February 29, 2012**

*Mission: The Urban Forestry Commission was established to advise the Mayor and City Council concerning the establishment of policy and regulations governing the protection, management, and conservation of trees and vegetation in the City of Seattle.*

**Purpose of Position Paper:** Provide guidance to the Seattle Interdepartmental Team (IDT) working on the 5-Year update of the Urban Forest Management Plan (UFMP) and support the UFMP vision:

*Seattle's urban forest is a thriving and sustainable mix of tree species and ages that creates a contiguous and healthy ecosystem that is valued and cared for by the City and all of its citizens as an essential environmental, economic, and community asset.*

**UFC Recommendation 1:** The UFC recommends keeping the existing canopy coverage goals for industrial lands at 10% in the 2012 UFMP update. We recognize that the latest assessment of the canopy cover within industrial zones has indicated that the existing canopy is actually lower (4%) than currently documented in the UFMP (8%). The UFC believes that maintaining the 10% goal, which in essence increases the amount of canopy needed from the 4% assessment, is the right approach to growing the overall canopy in the City of Seattle. The following provides justification for this approach and why the UFC believes that increasing canopy within the industrial areas of Seattle is important for meeting the overall 30% canopy goals of the City:

**Justifications:**

1. **Common assumptions about lack of capacity for growing canopy in industrial zones are potentially untrue/untested.** There are many anecdotal observations that suggest planting trees in the industrial areas is overly challenging due to poor soils, cost of planting, and obstruction to industrial operations, to name just a few. However, these assumptions that limit new tree plantings may not be true or other opportunities for plantings may exist given further analysis. Still other observations suggest that many businesses are planting trees to provide relief from an overly barren landscape. Because the industrial zone is the least canopied of all zones within the city, this zone may provide a significant opportunity for canopy coverage. All of these assumptions should be tested for further understanding across the variety of industrial areas within the City. More analysis is needed to verify challenges and determine opportunities before a deliberate decisions is/are made to change/about reducing the existing canopy goal. Changing the goal is not justified without this analysis.

2. **Return on Tree and Vegetation Value in Industrial Lands is likely the Highest of any Land Use.** With the least canopy cover and highest level of pollutants, the industrial zone will realize the greatest benefits from trees and vegetation of any zone ~~to plant~~. This is in part because some species of trees can provide phytoremediation, or the absorption of dangerous chemicals and other pollutants that have entered the soil. Industrial zones in Seattle provide the highest percentage of impervious surfaces proximate to waterfronts, where water quality is already of concern. ~~of Trees provide the~~ multiple ecosystem service benefits ~~trees provide~~ including ~~not only~~ ecosystem benefits like clean air, improved water quality, and soil remediation, but also as well as social benefits including increased worker productivity and health through enhanced feelings of well-being and a stronger connection to nature.
3. **Significant Opportunity to Improve Habitat Corridors.** Seattle's industrial zone is not only the least canopied zone, it is also a conspicuously tree-deprived zone that inhibits wildlife and ecosystem process exchange between Seattle's more forested zones in West Seattle and Beacon Hill<sup>2</sup>. Hydrological and biological connectivity promoted by a connected canopy is fragmented because of the barren industrial zone that separates zone exchange in south Seattle.
4. **Opportunities for Filling Street Tree Gaps.** It is the position of the UFC that significant tree planting opportunities may exist and can be quantified for the industrial zone with basic GIS analysis. This analysis is currently being planned and pertains to right-of-way corridors, sightlines and driveways in particular.
5. **Shifting Standards.** Stormwater regulations in industrial areas may require updates per Washington State Department of Ecology, requiring property owners to improve stormwater treatment on site. Trees provide stormwater management services, along with numerous other benefits. In fact, SPU found that the existing tree infrastructure in Seattle provides \$1.5B in stormwater services, as measured by the gray infrastructure that would be required to be built in order to deliver the same level of services that trees provide. ~~[need to research]~~
6. **Increasing Precedents.** Industrial operators and other uses within industrial zones are beginning to see the value of trees and vegetation in these areas. The following are just a few examples where change is happening:

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- The Port of Seattle in its Green Ports Initiative aims to lower emissions from all types of maritime operations and has made significant investments in several environmental programs, including green buildings and landscape standards.
- In tandem with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the City of Seattle, and property owners, the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition (DRCC) has been working since 2001 to secure a thorough cleanup of south Seattle, Washington's Lower Duwamish River for the Duwamish River Superfund Site. The Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition works to restore environmental health and habitat restoration and has made significant strides in renewing vegetation along the waterfront.
- The Port of Tacoma has implemented industrial rain garden projects, where trees and vegetation are serving to filter stormwater run off pollutants.
- Small private property owners and businesses have recently planted trees on their sites where eating establishments and smaller local stores are located.

These could be indicators that a more aggressive strategy for planting trees in industrial zones would be welcomed by some.

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**UFC Recommendation 2:** The UFC recommends establishing a revised and more aggressive strategy in the 5-Year 2012 UFMP Update for industrial lands that reflects the opportunities for growing the canopy in industrial areas to ensure the 10% goal can be reached over time. This should be based on the following:

1. Conduct a specific study with a willing property owner or within the public right of way that is representative of industrial zones to determine challenges and opportunities
- 1-2. Additional-Prepare environmental analysis to identify areas where trees can be planted
- 2-3. Outreach to private property owners and major public industrial operators (Port of Seattle, King County Metro, etc.) ~~Property Owner outreach~~
- 3-4. Conduct a cost analysis of industrial tree zone plantings relative to other zones, or within different types of industrial areas
- 4-5. Capacity-Determine capacity for additional canopy
6. Emphasize on tree value to the City in goal evaluation
- 5-7. Explore incentives for property owners in the industrial zones

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